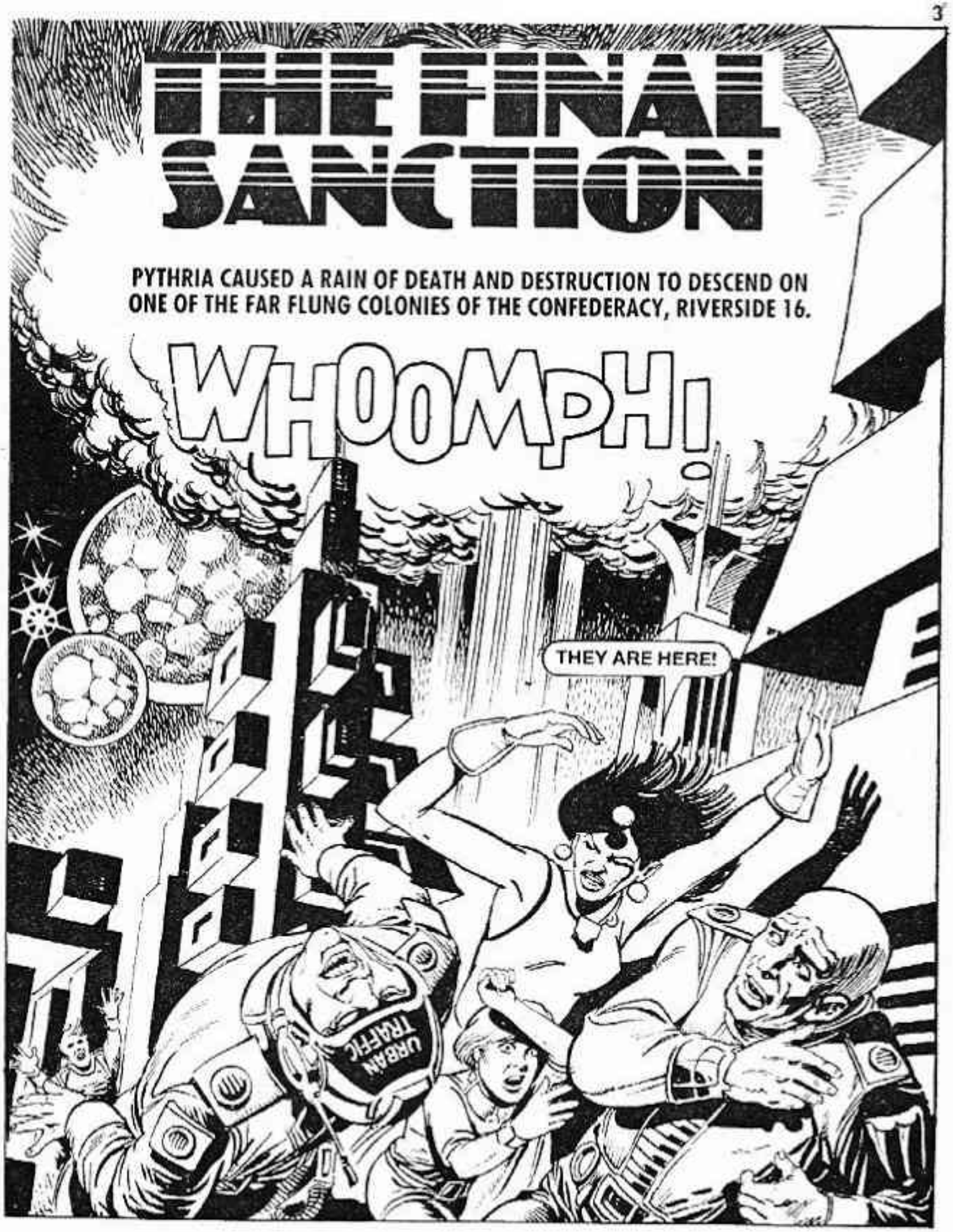
STAR BLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No 169

24p

The FINAL SANCTION


THE FINAL SANCTION
PYTHRIA CAUSED A RAIN OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION TO DESCEND ON ONE OF THE FAR FLUNG COLONIES OF THE CONFEDERACY, RIVERSIDE 16.
WHOOMPH!
THEY ARE HERE!
URBAN TRAFFIC

THE FINAL SANCTION

STARBLAZER

IN THE 22nd CENTURY THE THREAT OF WAR WAS DEALT WITH BY A SERIES OF RIGIDLY ENFORCED RULES, CALLED SANCTIONS.

THE FIRST SANCTION WAS NEGOTIATION.

A REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE LED TO THE SECOND SANCTION — AN ORDER TO SURRENDER.

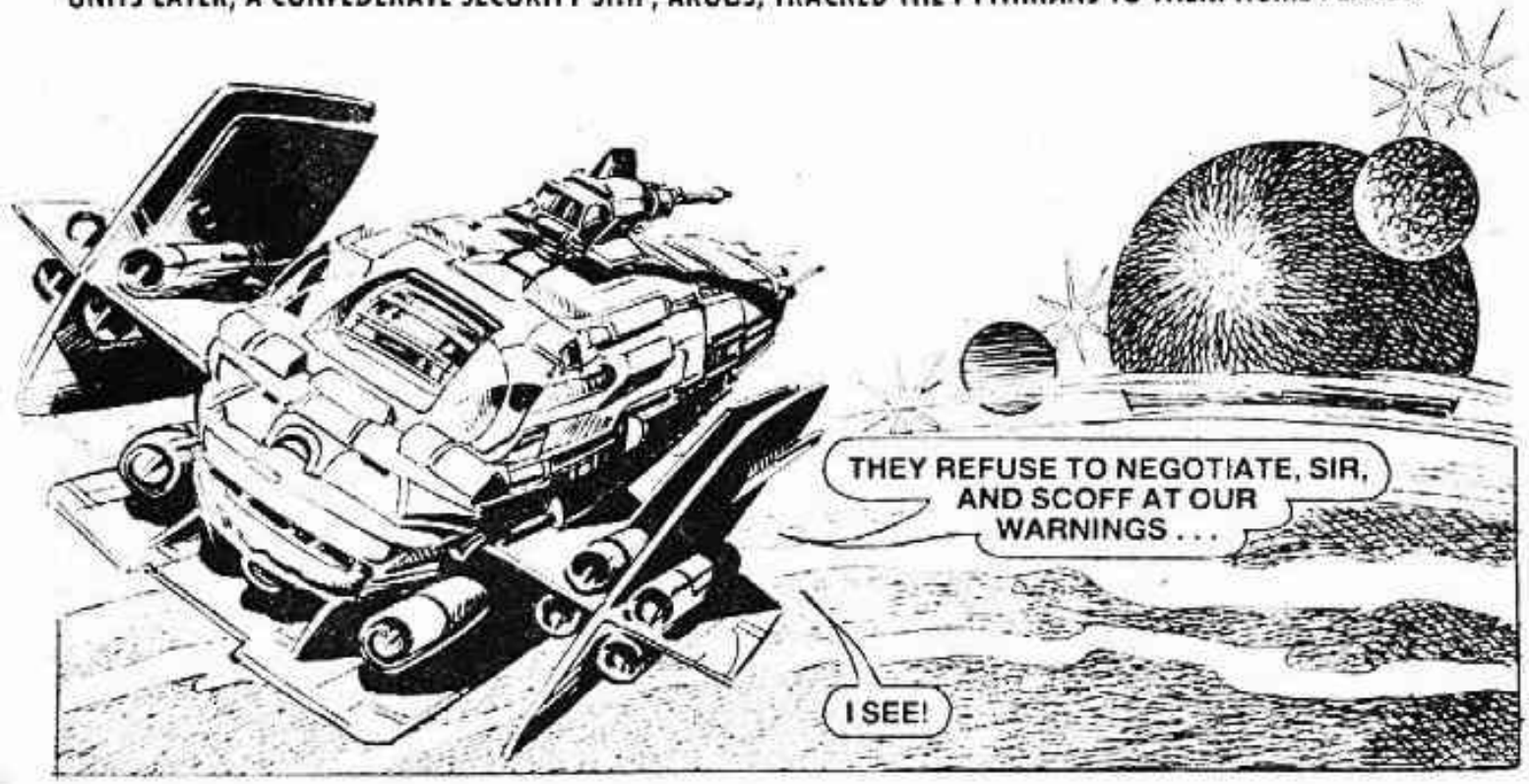
FAILURE TO DO SO MEANT INSTANT ELIMINATION — THE FINAL SANCTION.

DURING A SANCTION MISSION, COMMODORE WULF GALL OF THE EARTH DEFENCE FORCE UNEARTHED A WEB OF DECEIT THAT STRETCHED ALL THE WAY BACK TO TERRAN H.Q. KNOWLEDGE THAT CONDEMNED HIM TO DEATH!

THE DREAD PYTHRIANS, A RACE OF COLD BLOODED HUMANOIDS, HAD SWORN TO ANNIHILATE THE CONFEDERACY AND TAKE CONTROL OF THE VAST EMPIRE.

KILL! KILL! KILL! UNTIL THERE ARE NONE LEFT.

UNITS LATER, A CONFEDERATE SECURITY SHIP, ARGUS, TRACKED THE PYTHRIANS TO THEIR HOME PLANET.



ON BOARD THE TERRAN SHIP —
MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL — TOP PRIORITY. THEY HAVE ORDERED THE FINAL SANCTION.
I FEARED THEY WOULD — RELAY THE STANDARD WARNING TO THE PLANET.
BUT THE ANSWER TO THE "SURRENDER OR DIE" WARNING WAS DEFIANCE.
WE WILL ELIMINATE ALL HUMANOIDS FROM THIS GALAXY — AND THEN STRIKE AT THE CONFEDERACY BASE ITSELF!
WULF GALL SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY—
THEY NEVER LISTEN! BEGIN THE PROCEDURE ACCORDING TO STANDING ORDERS. AND MAY THE DEITY HAVE MERCY ON THEIR SOULS.

THE SANCTION DEVICE WAS THE MOST AWESOME WEAPON DEVISED BY MAN. AN ENERGY CONCENTRATOR, IT HAD THE ABILITY TO MULTIPLY INPUT A THOUSAND FOLD —
EXECUTE THE FINAL SANCTION!
IN A MATTER OF MICRO-SECONDS THE PYTHRIAN PLANET WAS HEATED TO A TEMPERATURE THAT MELTED ITS UPPER CRUST —

ALL LIFE ON THE PLANET HAS CEASED TO EXIST, SIR. MISSION SUCCESSFUL!
YES, LIEUTENANT VAGUS — VERY SUCCESSFUL, SO MUCH SO THAT WE REDUCE OURSELVES TO THEIR LEVEL AS SLAUGHTERERS OF MILLIONS. GET OUT OF HERE.

IT WASN'T THE FIRST TIME WULF HAD SEEN THE FINAL SANCTION USED — AND IT DISTURBED HIM MORE EACH TIME.
WE HAD NO CHOICE — IT WAS THEM OR US. THERE CANNOT BE ANY GLORY IN SUCH WHOLESALE KILLING.

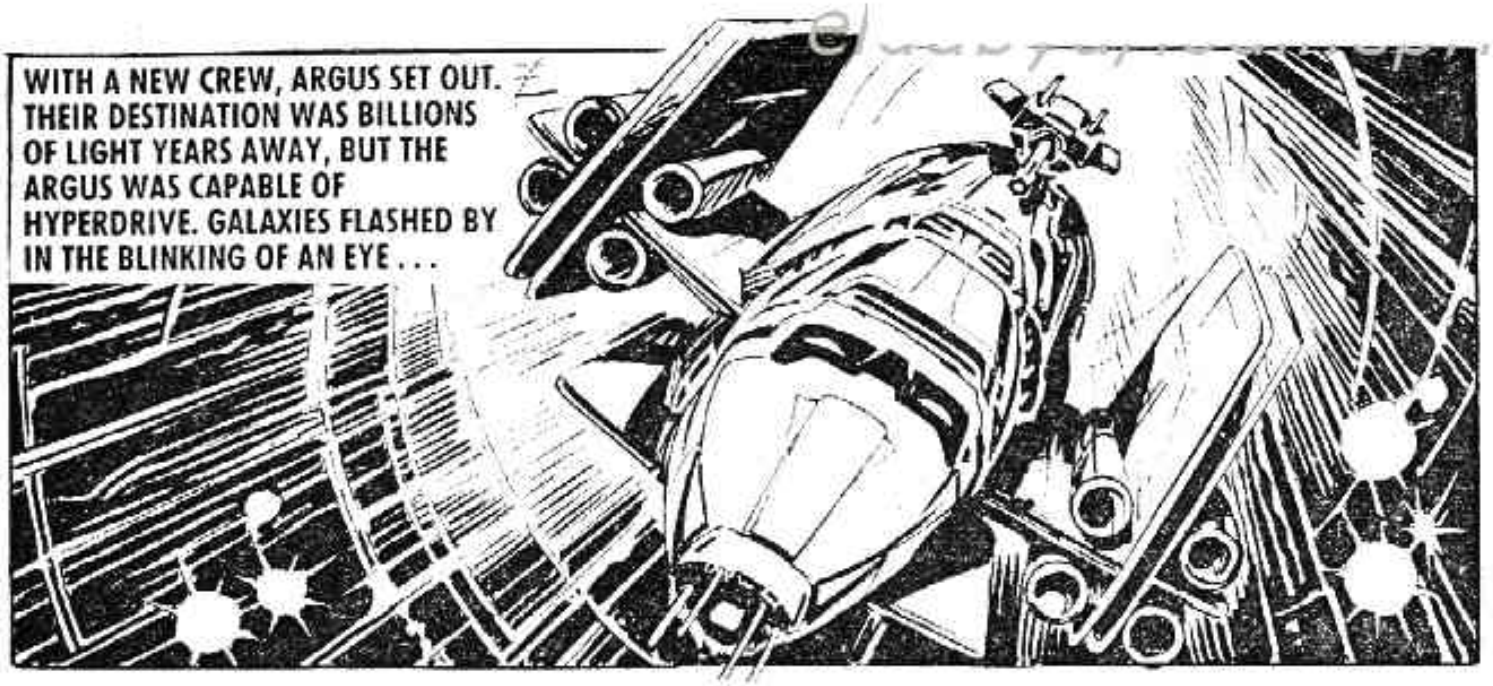
SOME TIME LATER, BACK AT EARTHBASE —
WELCOME BACK TO EARTH, WULF.
THANK YOU, LIASOR GORTH. I SEE THE OLD MOTHER PLANET HASN'T CHANGED MUCH.

NO — A MODEL WORLD! TO THINK A THOUSAND YEARS AGO THE EARTH WAS RAVAGED BY WARS, POLLUTION AND POVERTY. NOW IT HAS BECOME THE SHOWPIECE OF THE CONFEDERACY. A PLANET OF PERFECTION.

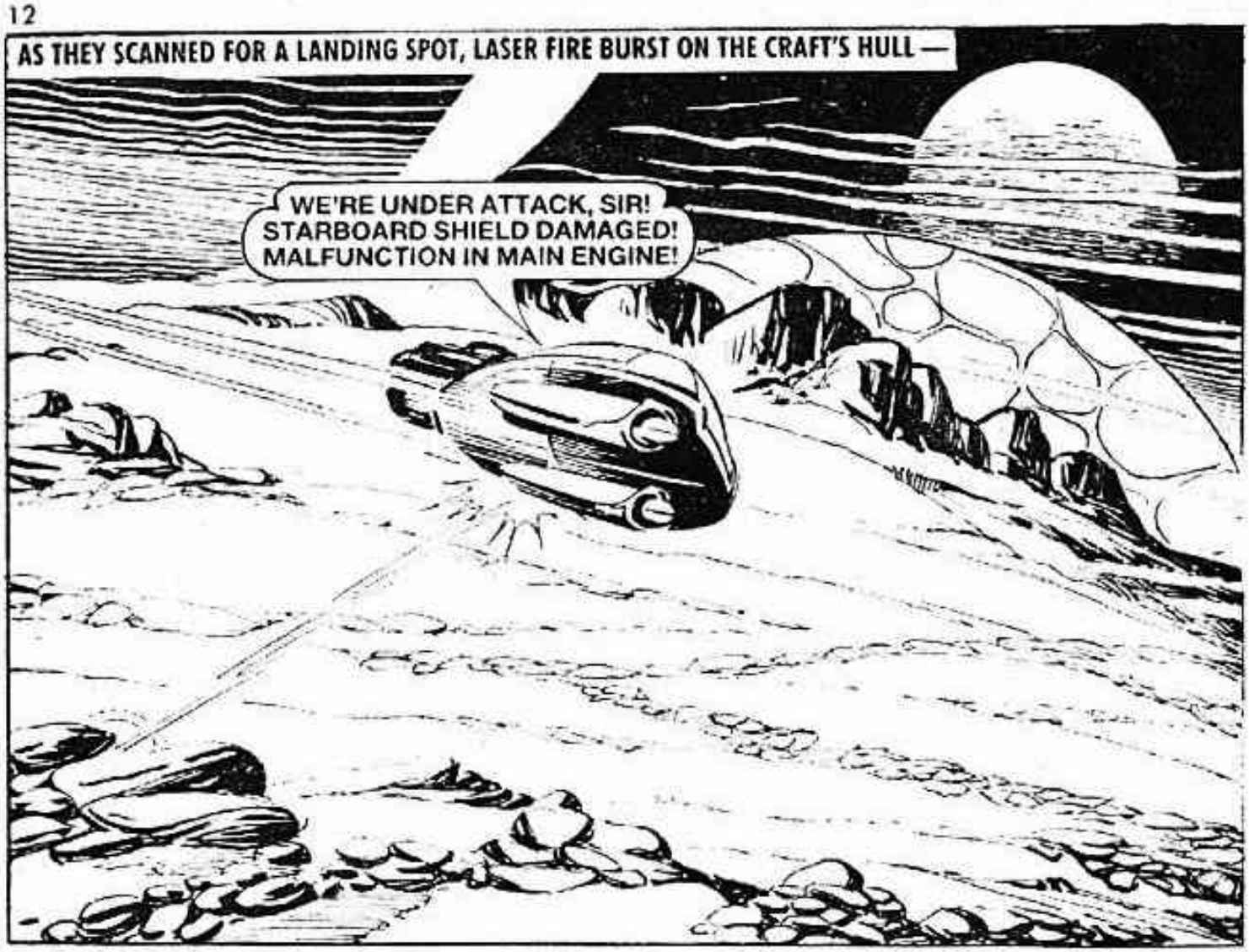
NO CRIME, NO DISEASE, NOTHING TO DISTURB THE PEACEFUL TRANQUILITY, BUT THAT'S NOT WHY YOU'RE HERE. WE'VE HAD DISTURBING NEWS . . .

WULF WAS TAKEN TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE CONFEDERATE SECURITY COUNCIL.
AN ALIEN CIVILISATION HAS BEEN DISCOVERED. ONE THAT IS AS EVIL AND CORRUPT AS THE LATE PYTHRIAN EMPIRE.
AND YOU WANT THE ARGUS TO INVESTIGATE.

YES! THIS IS NEGOTIATOR DANO, WHO WILL ACCOMPANY YOU. HE'LL TRY TO REASON WITH THE ALIENS AND SHOW THEM THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS.
GREETINGS, COMMODORE.
BUT DANO WILL HAVE NO CHANCE. HE IS TOO INEXPERIENCED. THEN MR WULF GALL, YOU WILL HAVE TO SANCTION THE PLANET. OUR SECRET WILL BE SAFE. AND IF YOU EVEN LOOK LIKE STUMBLING ON OUR SECRET . . . YOU'LL BE SANCTIONED TOO.



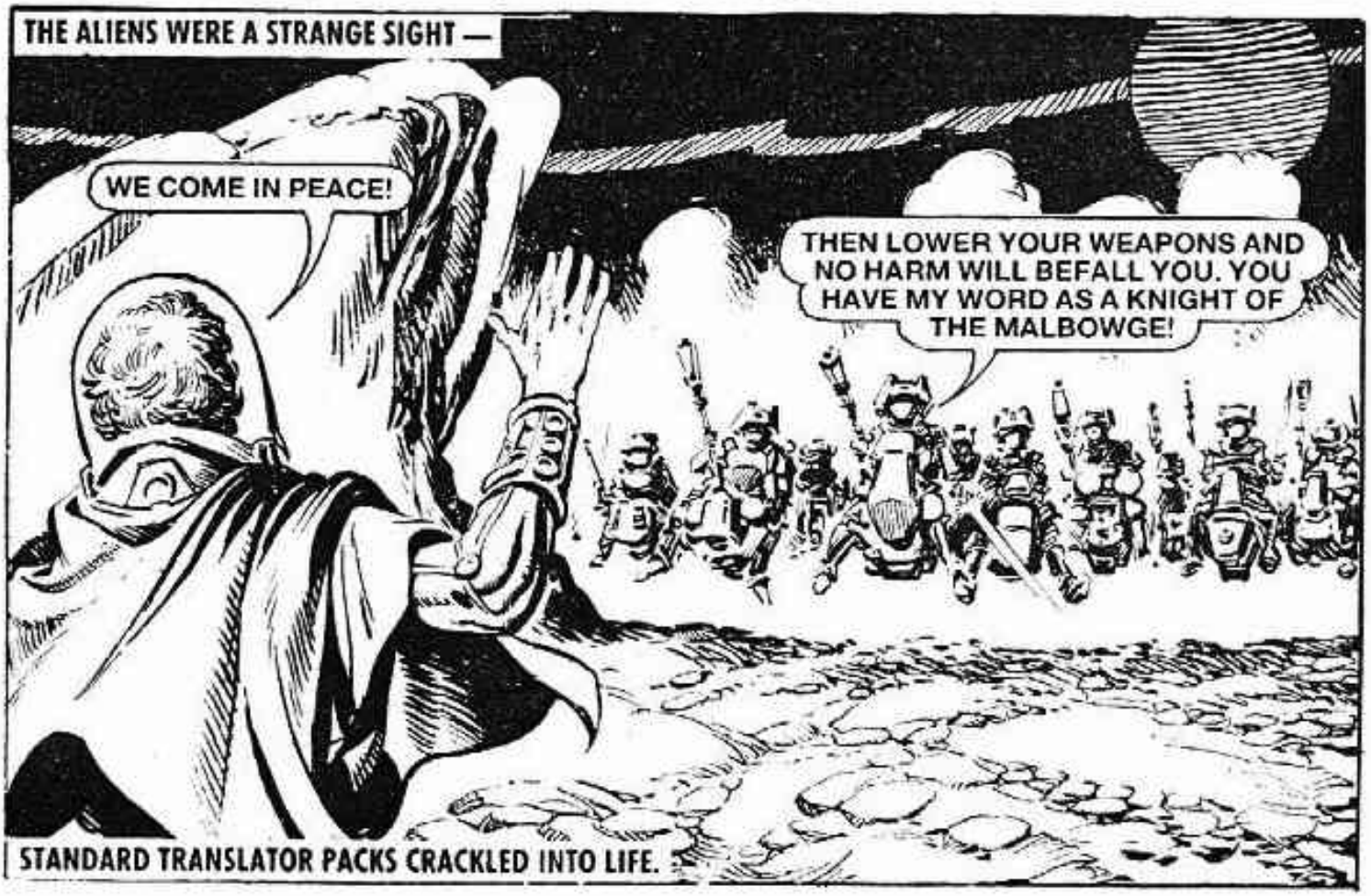
WULF AND HIS PARTY SET OUT IN A SHUTTLE CRAFT.


AS THEY SCANNED FOR A LANDING SPOT, LASER FIRE BURST ON THE CRAFT'S HULL —
WE'RE UNDER ATTACK, SIR! STARBOARD SHIELD DAMAGED! MALFUNCTION IN MAIN ENGINE!

SHE'S GOING TO CRASH!
RELAX, DANO! WE CAN HANDLE IT!

A DEVICE INSERTED INSIDE WULF'S BRAIN CONTROLLED THE COMPUTER OPERATING THE SHIP. IT MEANT INSTANT RESPONSE TO HIS EVERY COMMAND.
HANG ON! WE'RE DOWN!
THE CREW WERE SHAKEN, BUT UNHURT.
THOSE BEAMS MUST HAVE BEEN POWERFUL TO PENETRATE OUR SHIELD, SIR.
I WASN'T EXPECTING THAT. WE SEEM TO HAVE UNDERESTIMATED THESE PEOPLE.
LOOK!
SOMEONE'S COMING! TAKE UP DEFENSIVE POSITIONS.

THEY'RE HUMANOIDS!
LET ME TALK TO THEM!


THE ALIENS WERE A STRANGE SIGHT —
WE COME IN PEACE!
THEN LOWER YOUR WEAPONS AND NO HARM WILL BEFALL YOU. YOU HAVE MY WORD AS A KNIGHT OF THE MALBOWGE!
STANDARD TRANSLATOR PACKS CRACKLED INTO LIFE.

HIS WORD? THEY ATTACKED US!
DO IT! WE ARE HERE TO NEGOTIATE — NOT TO MAKE WAR!

WULF AND HIS MEN COMPLIED RELUCTANTLY —
DANO IS TOO TRUSTING, SIR.
THAT'S HIS JOB, LIEUTENANT. FOR NOW WE DO WHAT HE SAYS.

POVERTY WAS UNKNOWN IN THE CONFEDERACY — AND WULF AND HIS MEN WERE STUNNED BY WHAT THEY SAW.
BY THE MOONS OF RASTOR! I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH SQUALOR!
THE PLACE STINKS, SIR.
YES . . . THEY HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY TO SHOOT US DOWN, YET BASIC LIVING CONDITIONS ARE CRUDE.

AS THEY PASSED THROUGH THE SQUALID HAMLET —
FOOD! HAVE YOU ANY FOOD, SIRE?
OUT OF THE WAY, SERF!

YOU WILL HAVE NO NEED FOR FOOD NOW, OLD MAN!
NEGOTIATIONS WON'T BE EASY WITH THESE BRUTES!

SOME DISTANCE FROM THE HAMLET, THEY REACHED THEIR DESTINATION —
WE ARE HERE, OUTWORLDERS. THE CASTLETON OF MALBOWGE! AND SOON YOU WILL MEET MY MASTER.
AS THEY DISMOUNTED A SINISTER FIGURE APPROACHED.
HERETICS! UNBELIEVERS!
NOW WHAT?
THEY ARE TO BE PUT TO DEATH AT ONCE! THAT IS THE LAW OF TRACTUS THE ALL-SEEING ONE!
WE'VE GOT TROUBLE HERE! PREPARE TO DEFEND YOURSELVES!

SET BLASTERS TO STUN!
URRGGHHH!
NO YOU DON'T!
WHAT GOES ON HERE?

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN, COMMANDER!
NO!
STOP THIS AT ONCE! I, THE BARON GAMOLYN, COMMAND IT!

HE HAS STRUCK A PRIEST! HE MUST BE EXECUTED!
A CORPSE IS OF NO VALUE TO US, BUT HE WILL BE PUNISHED FOR HIS AUDACITY.
TAKE HIM TO THE CHAMBER OF CORRECTION. WE WILL TEACH THE OUTWORLDER HOW WE DEAL WITH THOSE WHO OPPOSE MY WILL!
THERE WAS DELIGHT ON BARON GAMOLYN'S FACE AS HE GAVE THE ORDER.
SIR, WE CAME IN PEACE, BUT WERE ATTACKED BY YOUR MEN. AT LEAST LISTEN TO ME!
I LISTEN TO NO ONE! BUT I WILL SHOW YOU ROUND MY DOMAIN. YOU MAY BE HERE FOR SOME TIME.

A COMPUTERISED LAND VEHICLE TOOK THEM ON A TOUR OF THE AREA.

THE LOW BORN DO ALL THE HARD PHYSICAL LABOUR FOR US.

SURELY YOU HAVE MACHINES CAPABLE OF REPLACING MANPOWER?

MACHINES REQUIRE ENERGY, AND OUR PLANET LACKS THE FACILITIES TO PRODUCE IT. THE LOW BORN PROVIDE A CHEAP ALTERNATIVE.

THE CONFEDERATION CAN HELP YOUR PEOPLE, BARON. YOU MUST LISTEN TO OUR PROPOSALS.

WE NEED NO HELP FROM ANYONE! NO ONE ASKED YOU TO COME HERE. OUR GOD, TRACTUS, TAKES CARE OF ALL OUR NEEDS.

MEANWHILE . . .
A SHORT SPELL WITH THE PSYCHOMETRIC PERSUASION DEVICE WILL CURE THIS ONE!
I WOULDN'T COUNT ON THAT!

THE DEVICE DESTROYS YOUR WILLPOWER! WE USE IT ON THE LOW BORN! IT HAS NEVER FAILED TO WORK.

WULF WAS PUSHED INTO A DEEP PIT—
ENJOY YOURSELF, OUTWORLDER!
IT WILL BE PAINFUL AT FIRST, BUT AFTER A WHILE YOU WON'T CARE!

SHAKEN, WINDED, BUT OTHERWISE INTACT, WULF SURVEYED HIS PRISON—
THIS PLANET DEFIES RATIONAL EXPLANATION. THEY HAVE A HIGH TECHNOLOGY — YET THEY ACT LIKE PRIMITIVE SAVAGES!
JUST THEN . . .
WHAT THE . . .?!!!
THE MACHINE FIRED A BEAM OF ENERGY. TO WULF IT FELT LIKE RED HOT NEEDLES WERE PROBING THE INSIDE OF HIS SKULL.

WULF FOUGHT THE MACHINE'S POWER—
NO! NO! I MUST . . . FIGHT IT! . . .

SOME DISTANCE AWAY . . .
THE OUTWORLDER IS STRONG. HE RESISTS THE DEVICE.
THIS IS NO COMMON SERF! GAMOLYN SHOULD HAVE DESTROYED THEM ALL WHEN THEY LANDED.

THE PRIESTS WERE LOOKING AT A HOLOGRAM PICTURE OF WULF'S BRAIN.
IT IS SIMILAR TO A SERF'S, BUT THE NEURAL CELLS ARE MORE HIGHLY DEVELOPED. PROBABLY THE RESULT OF GENETIC ENGINEERING.

DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF THE CASTLE, A FLOATING MONITOR ISSUED ORDERS.
HAVE THE HERETIC OUTWORLDERS BROUGHT TO ME AT ONCE! I WISH TO STUDY THEM MORE CLOSELY BEFORE WE KILL THEM.

THE ROBOT DEVICE WAS TURNED OFF.
ALMOST! ANOTHER FEW SECONDS AND I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HOLD OUT.

NO WONDER THERE'S NO RESISTANCE FROM THOSE SERFS. THAT MACHINE DOES A NEAT JOB OF PSYCHOSURGERY!
WE WON'T HAVE ANY MORE TROUBLE FROM YOU, OUTWORLDER!
NOT SO!

TRY THIS FOR SIZE!

THE KICK FROM WULF'S HEAVY SPACE BOOT HAD DONE MORE DAMAGE THAN HE THOUGHT!
BY THE TWIN SUNS OF ARGOSSA! IT'S AN ANDROID!

USING THE DROID'S ENERGY CELL, WULF RECHARGED HIS PHASER.
WULF TO ARGUS! CAN YOU LOCATE THE OTHERS?
YES, SIR! THEY ARE NOT FAR AWAY. WE WILL GUIDE YOU.

WULF CLIMBED STEPS AND FOUND HIMSELF ON THE ROOF—
WHAT THE . . .?!!! WHO ARE YOU?
NO TIME FOR INTRODUCTIONS!

I BET THAT'S SCRAMBLED YOUR CIRCUITS.
UUUURRGGGH..

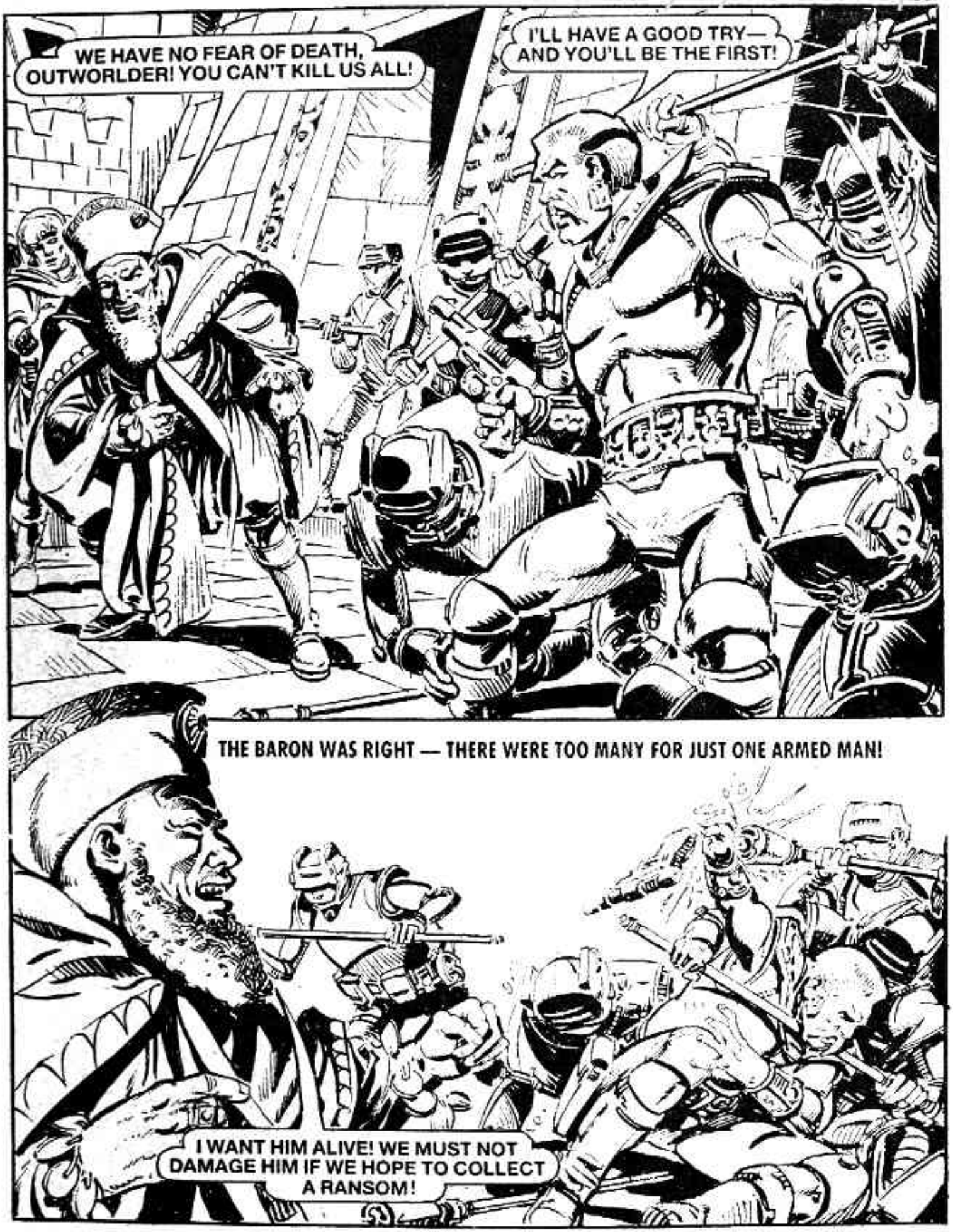
DANO AND THE OTHERS ARE APPROACHING IN THAT LAND VEHICLE, SIR.
GOOD! STAND BY FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. I THINK WE'VE STAYED LONG ENOUGH ON THIS PLANET.

THEY ONLY SENT ONE GUARD TO COLLECT ME BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT I'D BE DOCILE. NEXT TIME I WON'T BE SO LUCKY!

THE VEHICLE LANDED—
I'VE ARRANGED FOR FOOD TO BE SENT TO YOUR LIVING QUARTERS.
PRISON CELLS, YOU MEAN. WHAT ABOUT THE COMMODORE?

I'M HERE, DANO! AND YOU'D BETTER TELL THE BARON NOT TO TRY ANYTHING, OR I'LL SCATTER HIS LOGIC CIRCUITS TO THE WINDS!
LOGIC CIRCUITS?
YES, I'LL BET HE'S AN ANDROID LIKE HIS MEN. I'VE LEARNED A LITTLE ABOUT THIS PLANET. THE REST I CAN DEDUCE.

YOU CAN'T NEGOTIATE WITH MACHINES, DANO! WE MUST DESTROY THE EVIL THING THAT RULES THIS PLANET — THE ONE THEY CALL TRACTUS!
BUT—
KILL THEM!


WE HAVE NO FEAR OF DEATH, OUTWORLDER! YOU CAN'T KILL US ALL!
I'LL HAVE A GOOD TRY— AND YOU'LL BE THE FIRST!
THE BARON WAS RIGHT — THERE WERE TOO MANY FOR JUST ONE ARMED MAN!
I WANT HIM ALIVE! WE MUST NOT DAMAGE HIM IF WE HOPE TO COLLECT A RANSOM!

GRAB THAT HANDGUN, SIR!
BUT—
HALT, IN THE NAME OF TRACTUS!

THE HERETICS ARE TO BE TAKEN TO THE TEMPLE OF TRACTUS! THAT IS A DIRECT ORDER!

CONTACT WITH YOUR SHIP IS FORBIDDEN, HERETIC!
MY CREW WERE CONCERNED ABOUT OUR SAFETY. SURELY YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?
SILENCE! BARON GAMOLYN HAS DISOBEYED THE LAW OF TRACTUS BY NOT TURNING YOU OVER TO US. HE SHALL BE PUNISHED.
THE BARON STARTED TO PROTEST—
SILENCE! THE WILL OF TRACTUS HAS BEEN DONE!

WULF AND THE OTHERS WERE TAKEN TO THE INQUISITORS.
KNEEL BEFORE US, HERETICS!
FIRST I THINK YOU SHOULD ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS.

YOU WILL OBEY!
BETTER DO AS THEY SAY!
I HAVE COME TO NEGOTIATE A TREATY BETWEEN YOU AND THE CONFEDERATION. WE CAN HELP YOU. OUR TECHNOLOGY CAN MAKE YOUR PLANET RICH AND FERTILE. WE ARE TIRED OF CONFRONTATION.
A FLOATING MONITOR BOOMED OUT A MESSAGE—
I AM TRACTUS, THE RULER OF ALL. WHAT ARE THE TERMS OF THIS TREATY YOU OFFER US?

THAT IN RETURN FOR TECHNOLOGICAL AID YOU FORSAKE ALL VIOLENCE AND PROMISE TO LIVE IN PEACE.
HERE IS YOUR ANSWER, OUTWORLDER . . .

AAARRRGGGHHH...

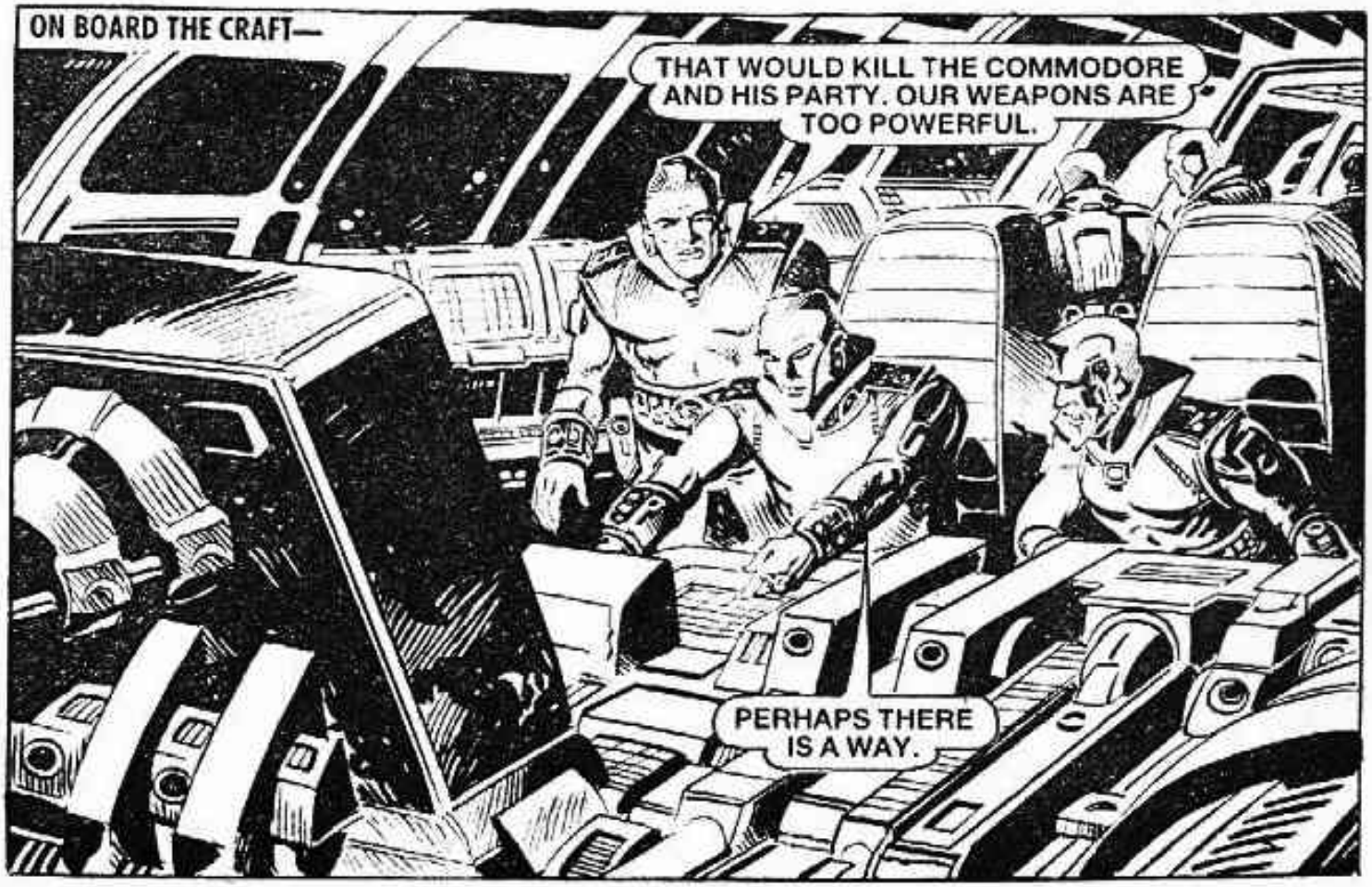
THE HERETICS HAVE OFFENDED TRACTUS. THEY'LL BE TORTURED TO MAKE THEM CONFESS TO THEIR SINS.

YOU MURDERED HIM!

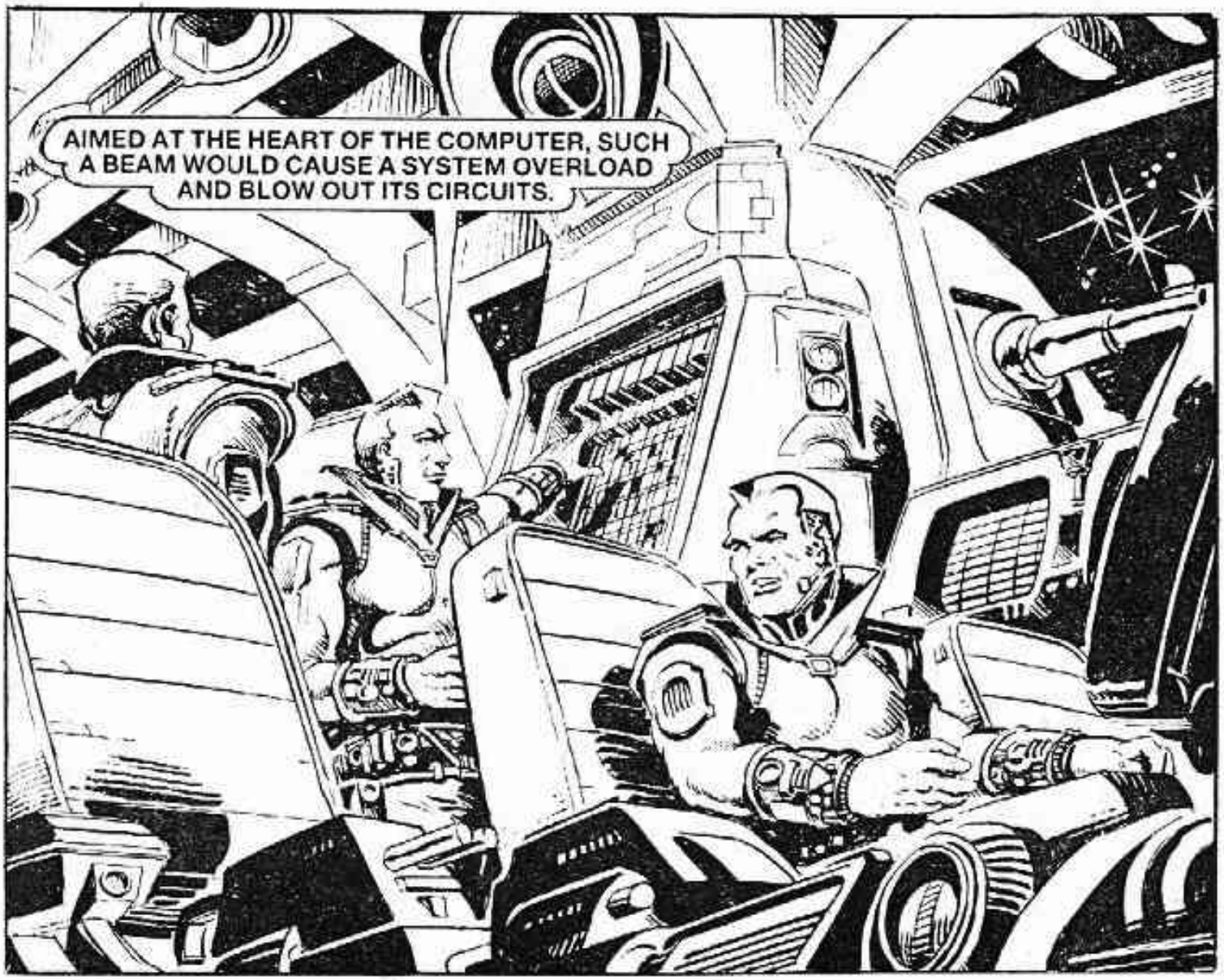
VAGUS COULDN'T CONTROL HIS ANGER.

TELL THEM WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE USED THE FINAL SANCTION ON THE PYTHRIANS, SIR!
MR VAGUS, YOU HAVE A BIG MOUTH — SHUT IT!
THIS WEAPON IS ON YOUR SHIP, I TAKE IT. IN THAT CASE I MUST HAVE A CLOSER LOOK.

A HIGH ENERGY BEAM PROBED THE ARGUS.
IT'S SCANNING OUR WEAPONS SYSTEMS!
WE COULD HIT THAT THING WITH A PHOTON BOLT AND BLOW IT TO BITS.


ON BOARD THE CRAFT—
THAT WOULD KILL THE COMMODORE AND HIS PARTY. OUR WEAPONS ARE TOO POWERFUL.
PERHAPS THERE IS A WAY.

ORUS, THE SCIENTIFIC OFFICER, HAD AN IDEA.
I SUGGEST BEAMING DOWN A NARROW WAVELENGTH RADIO SIGNAL AT ULTRASONIC FREQUENCY. OUR SCANNERS TELLS US THAT TRACTUS IS A COMPUTER.

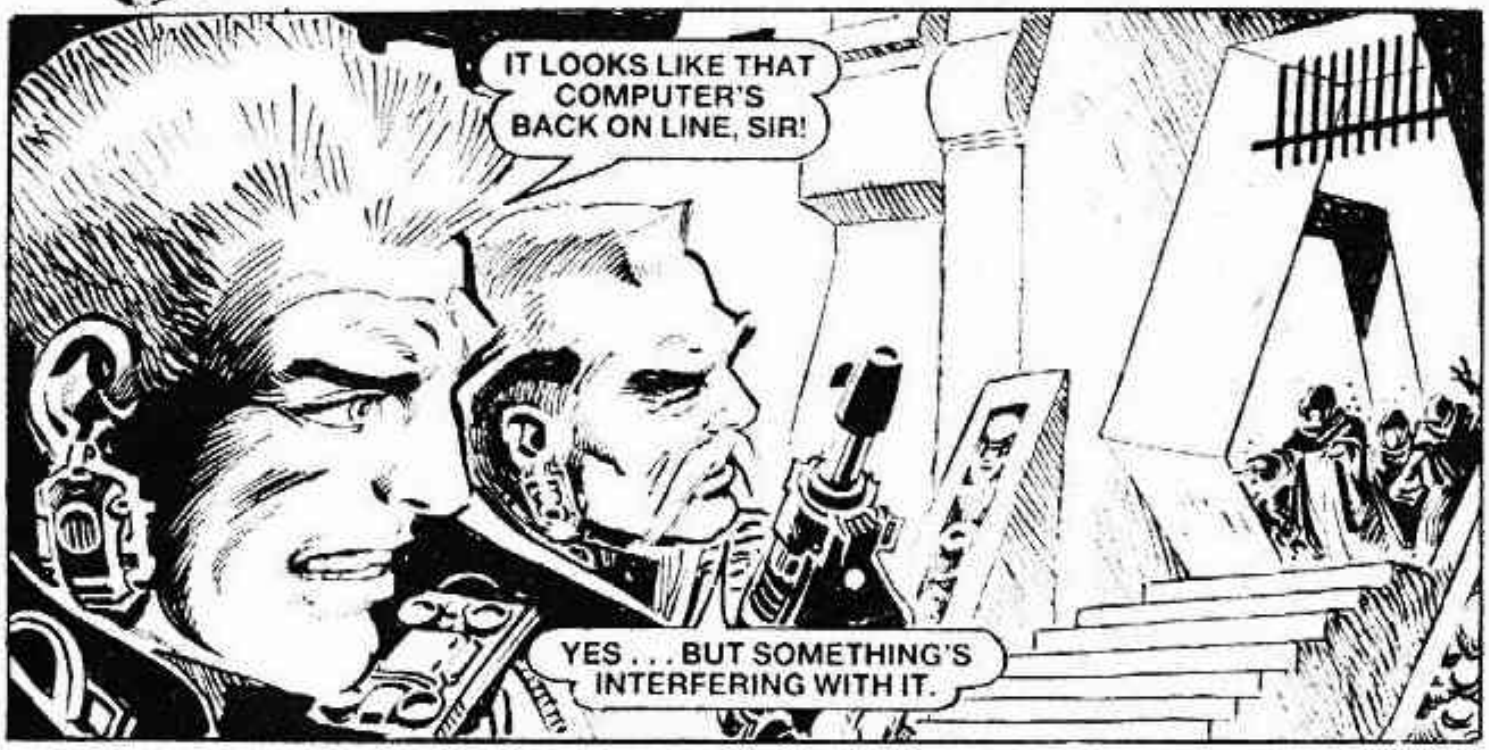

AIMED AT THE HEART OF THE COMPUTER, SUCH A BEAM WOULD CAUSE A SYSTEM OVERLOAD AND BLOW OUT ITS CIRCUITS.

MEANWHILE, DEEP INSIDE THE ALIEN CITADEL—
IF THAT THING LEARNS HOW TO BUILD A FINAL SANCTION WEAPON WE'RE IN REAL TROUBLE.
SORRY, SIR. I SHOULD HAVE KEPT MY MOUTH SHUT.

CONDITION RED! SYSTEM OVERLOAD! I . . . AM LOSING . . . CONTROL!
SYSTEM OVERLOAD? JUPE — TRACTUS IS A COMPUTER!
LOOK, SIR! THOSE PRIESTS HAVE STOPPED MOVING!
LET'S SEE . . .

ROBOTS! OF COURSE!! TRACTUS WOULDN'T TRUST MERE HUMANOIDS TO DO HIS WORK!
WULF AND THE OTHERS SAW THEIR CHANCE TO ESCAPE.
OUR WEAPONS!

BUT—
THE PRISONERS! THEY MUST NOT GET AWAY!
WE WILL STOP THEM, TRACTUS!


IT LOOKS LIKE THAT COMPUTER'S BACK ON LINE, SIR!
YES . . . BUT SOMETHING'S INTERFERING WITH IT.

THEY OPENED FIRE ON THE ROBOT PRIESTS—
NICE SHOOTING, MEN!

I'M GOING TO OVERLOAD THE POWER PACK ON MY PISTOL! SO GET READY TO TAKE COVER.
RIGHT, SIR!
NOW!

THE PISTOL WAS TURNED INTO A VERY EFFECTIVE GRENADE AS ALL ITS ENERGY WAS DISCHARGED AT ONCE.

I RECKON TRACTUS WILL BE NEEDING SOME NEW HELPERS!
YES, AND HE'S NEXT ON OUR LIST.

WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE MAIN CONTROL AND TURN HIM OFF — PERMANENTLY!
BUT TRACTUS WAS FAR FROM FINISHED.
THE PUNY FOOLS! DO THEY THINK THEY CAN DESTROY *ME*?

WULF AND HIS MEN SUDDENLY FOUND THEMSELVES IN A STEAMING JUNGLE.
WHAT HAPPENED?
THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!
AIM FOR ITS HEAD! FULL PHOTON POWER!

GOT IT!

THE JUNGLE SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED—
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

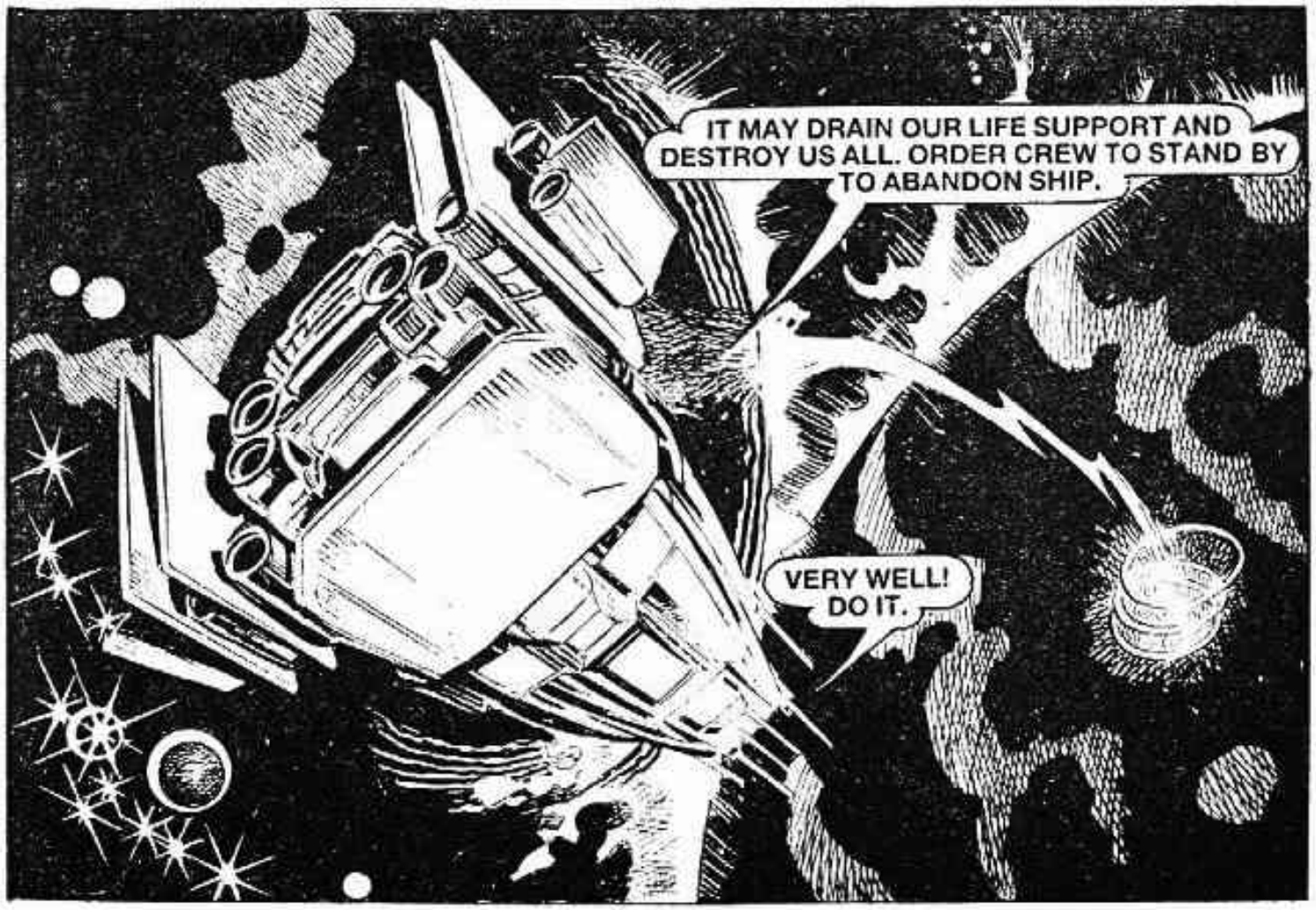
WHAT'S THAT?
LET'S NOT WAIT TO FIND OUT!

THE STRANGE OBJECT WAS OUT TO KILL THEM—
TAKE COVER!

ARE WE DREAMING THIS, SIR?
NO, IT'S TRACTUS. WE'RE IN A HOLOFIELD. TRACTUS IS USING POWERS TO CREATE IMAGES FROM THIS PLANET'S PAST.

MEANWHILE ON ARGUS—
YOUR PLAN FAILED, ORUS. THE COMMODORE AND THE OTHERS ARE DOOMED.
NOT YET!
SO THEY'RE NOT REAL?
THAT HARDLY MATTERS. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THEY CAN KILL! AND HERE COME SOME MORE!

I MUST INCREASE THE FREQUENCY BY FEEDING IT WITH EVERY AVAILABLE SYSTEM ON THE SHIP. THEORETICALLY SUCH A THING IS POSSIBLE.
WHAT ARE THE RISKS?


IT MAY DRAIN OUR LIFE SUPPORT AND DESTROY US ALL. ORDER CREW TO STAND BY TO ABANDON SHIP.
VERY WELL! DO IT.

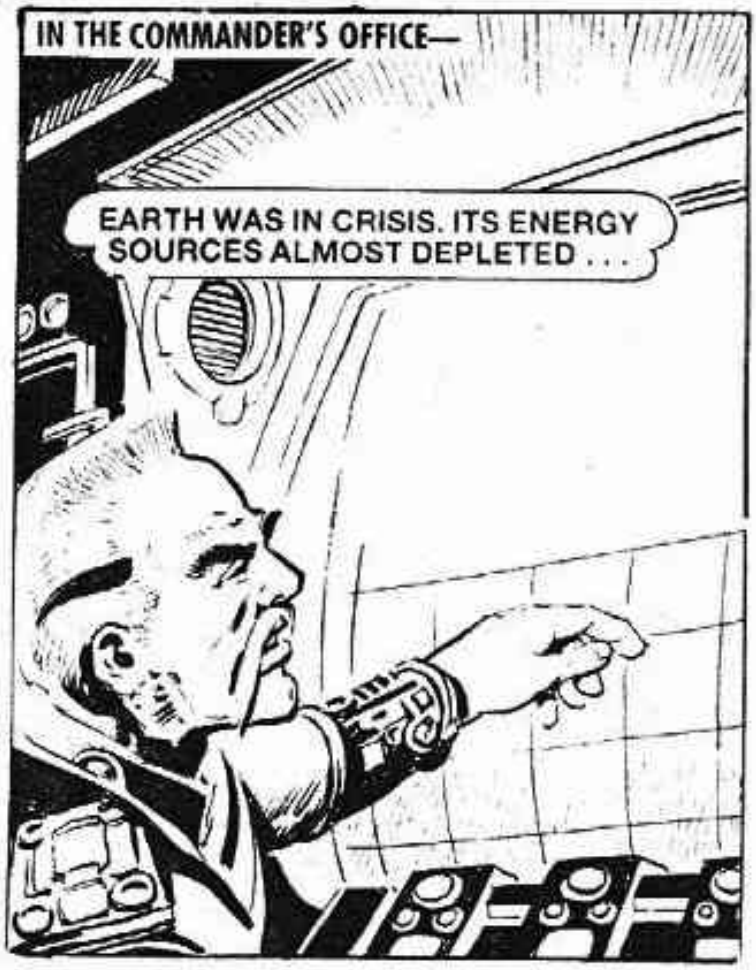
A THIN BEAM OF ELECTRONIC PULSES, VIBRATING AT BILLIONS OF CYCLES PER MICROSECOND, HIT TRACTUS—
NO! NO!
THE RESULT WAS A MASSIVE POWER SURGE THAT BURNT OUT THE COMPUTER'S CIRCUITS.
IN THE HOLOFIELD—
THE IMAGES, SIR! THEY'VE GONE!
I'LL BET THE ARGUS HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS.
SUDDENLY THE WHOLE BUILDING BEGAN TO SHAKE—
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! I'VE GOT A FEELING TRACTUS IS ABOUT TO BLOW HIS FUSE!

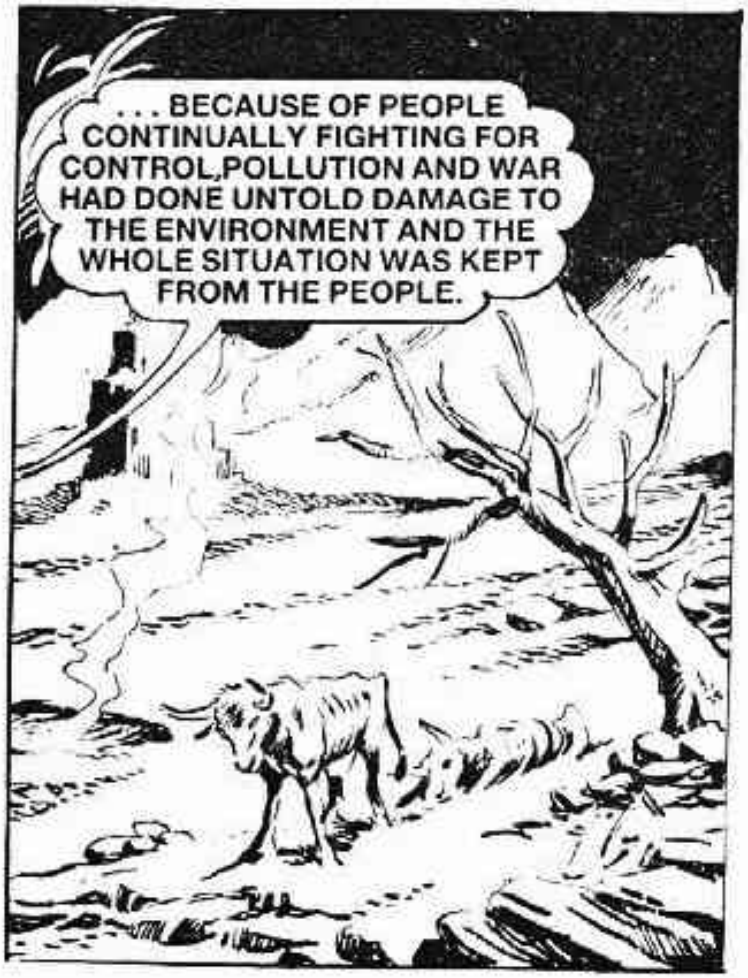
THEY MADE IT WITH ONLY MINUTES TO SPARE.
THAT WAS CLOSE, SIR!
I'LL GET ARGUS TO SEND DOWN ANOTHER SHUTTLE. THE SOONER WE'RE OFF THIS PLANET THE BETTER!
THE SHUTTLE ARRIVED QUICKLY—
I DON'T THINK THOSE ALIENS DOWN THERE WERE READY TO JOIN THE CONFEDERATION.
NO! BUT WITHOUT THAT EVIL COMPUTER PERHAPS THEY'LL SORT THEMSELVES OUT IN TIME.

LATER . . .
NICE WORK, ORUS.
I THINK YOU'D BETTER COME WITH ME, SIR. THERE'S SOMETHING YOU OUGHT TO SEE.
I MANAGED TO EXTRACT A LOT OF DATA FROM TRACTUS BEFORE IT EXPLODED.
SO WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU, ORUS?
WHAT WULF SAW SHOOK HIM TO THE CORE—
IT CAN'T BE TRUE — OR CAN IT?

ARGUS RETURNED TO EARTH—
I WAS SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT DANO, COMMANDER. HE WAS A FINE MAN.
YES, HE WAS . . . AND YOU KILLED HIM!
ARE YOU MAD, COMMANDER?
THAT PLANET WE WERE SENT TO WAS EARTH. THIS PLACE IS A REPLICA! YOU KNEW!
THERE WAS ALWAYS A DANGER YOU'D LEARN THE TRUTH. THAT'S WHY YOU AND YOUR CREW ARE NOW CONDEMNED TO DIE.

WULF MANAGED TO CONTROL HIS ANGER.
I HAVE THE EVIDENCE HERE — IN THIS RECORDING CAPSULE. LET'S GO TO YOUR OFFICE AND PLAY IT. NO FUNNY STUFF . . . I HAVE COPIES.
CURSE YOU, GALL!


IN THE COMMANDER'S OFFICE—
EARTH WAS IN CRISIS. ITS ENERGY SOURCES ALMOST DEPLETED . . .


. . . BECAUSE OF PEOPLE CONTINUALLY FIGHTING FOR CONTROL,POLLUTION AND WAR HAD DONE UNTOLD DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE WHOLE SITUATION WAS KEPT FROM THE PEOPLE.

BUT NEW COLONIES HAD SPRUNG UP THROUGHOUT THE GALAXIES AND PEOPLE WERE TRANSPORTED. THE EARTH BECAME ISOLATED, THOUSANDS OF LIGHT YEARS AWAY.

THOSE WHO CHOSE TO REMAIN ON EARTH WERE GIVEN A MIGHTY COMPUTER TO HELP THEM SURVIVE — TRACTUS WAS ITS NAME.
IT WAS A SOURCE OF ENERGY AND NOURISHMENT. IT TAPPED THE VAST STORES OF POWER IN THE EARTH'S CORE. BUT IT DEVELOPED A FAULT, AS IS LIKELY IN A CONTAMINATED ENVIRONMENT.

WHO KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED? BUT TRACTUS BECAME EVIL. IT BUILT ANDROIDS TO CARRY OUT ITS BIDDING.
MEANWHILE THE CONFEDERATION HAD BUILT ANOTHER EARTH. ONE DEEMED MORE FITTING TO THE IDEAL OF A MOTHER PLANET. THE OLD EARTH WAS FORGOTTEN. THE RECORDS OF ITS LOCATION ERASED. IT WAS A MASTERLY EXAMPLE OF DECEPTION.
UNTIL THAT PROBE SHIP REDISCOVERED IT BY PURE CHANCE. INCREDIBLE!

YOU KNEW WHEN THAT PROBE SHIP "REDISCOVERED" EARTH THAT THE DECEPTION WOULD DISCREDIT YOU! WE WERE SENT TO NEGOTIATE A TREATY WITH OUR OWN KIND — IF WE FAILED, EARTH WOULD BE SANCTIONED, AND THAT WOULD BE THAT.
WELL, YOU CAN HAVE YOUR JOB — DO YOUR OWN DIRTY WORK. ALL THESE YEARS I'VE BEEN ANNIHILATING PEOPLE ON YOUR ORDERS. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I KILLED MY OWN KIND?

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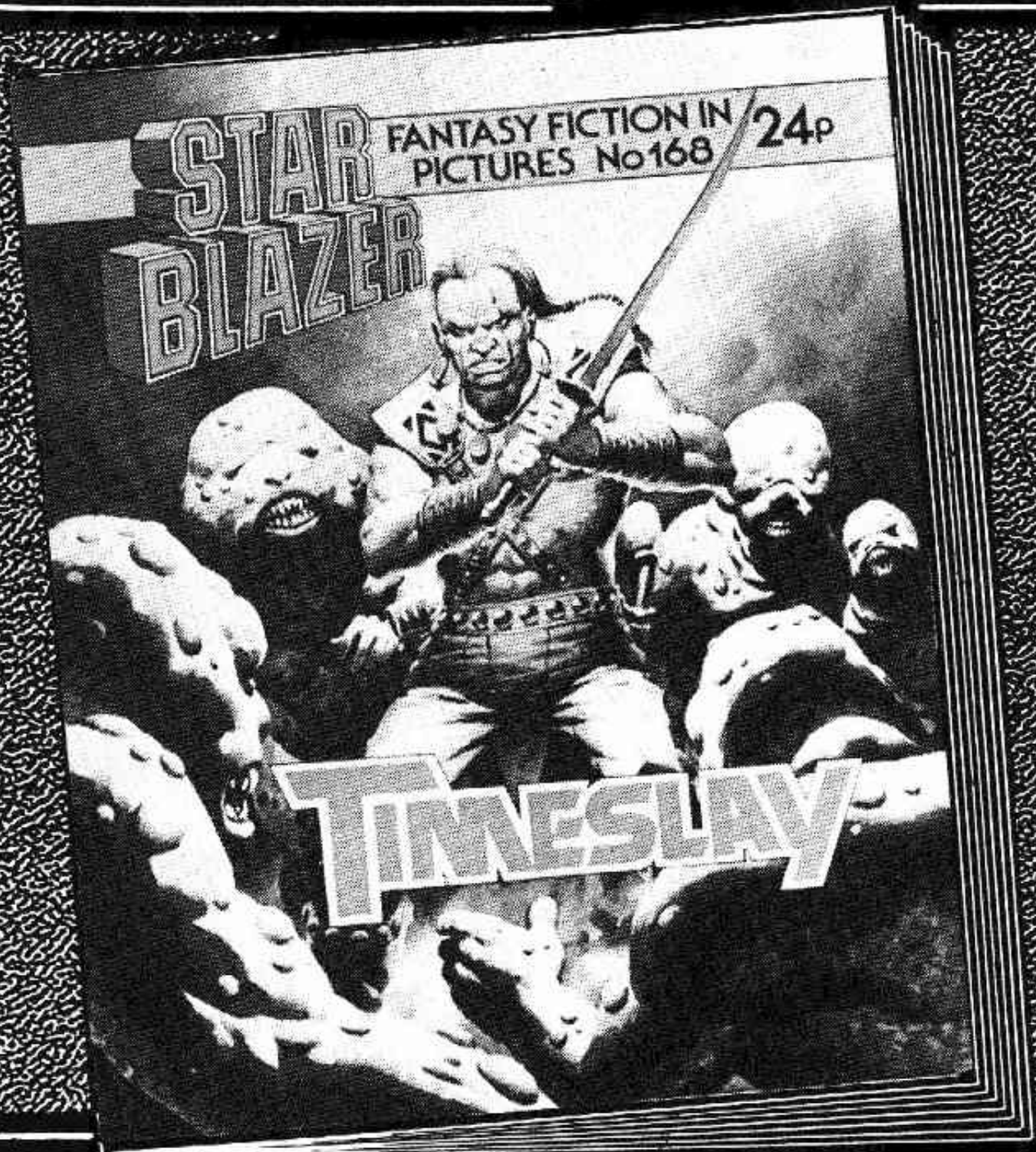
DON'T FORGET THIS MONTH'S *OTHER*



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IN THE 22nd CENTURY THE THREAT OF WAR WAS DEALT WITH BY A SERIES OF RIGIDLY ENFORCED RULES, CALLED SANCTIONS.

THE FIRST SANCTION WAS NEGOTIATION.

A REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE LED TO THE SECOND SANCTION — AN ORDER TO SURRENDER.

FAILURE TO DO SO MEANT INSTANT ELIMINATION — THE FINAL SANCTION.

DURING A SANCTION MISSION, COMMODORE WULF GALL OF THE EARTH DEFENCE FORCE UNEARTHED A WEB OF DECEIT THAT STRETCHED ALL THE WAY BACK TO TERRAN H.Q. KNOWLEDGE THAT CONDEMNED HIM TO DEATH!